

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, TH

SUBJ: TENSION MOUNTS OVER DUSIT THANI HOTEL STRIKE

REF: BANGKOK 14315

1. BEING UNCLASSIFIED. FOLLOWING FAILURE OF MANAGEMENT SIDE TO SEND A REPRESENTATIVE TO MEET WITH LABOR SPOKESMAN AT MEETING CALLED BY MINISTRY OF INTERIOR, STRIKE LEADER THOEDPHUM CHAIDEE (PRESIDENT OF HOTEL AND HOSTEL WORKERS' ASSOCIATION) HAS SET DEADLINE OF SEPTEMBER 13. IF NO SETTLEMENT BY THEN, ACCORDING TO THOEDPHUM AS REPORTED IN PRESS, LARGE DEMONSTRATIONS TO INCLUDE SYMPATHY STRIKERS FROM OTHER HOTELS AND LABOR ASSOCIATIONS WILL BE HELD IN FRONT OF HOTEL AND ACROSS THE STREET IN LUMPINI PARK. ACCORDING TO PRESS, STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS HAVE AGREED TO PARTICIPATE.

2. "NATION" SEPTEMBER 11 REPORTED RUMOR THAT DIRECTOR GENERAL NIKNOM CHANTHARAWITHUN OF DEPARTMENT OF LABOR MIGHT BE TRANSFERRED AT HIS OWN REQUEST. SAME SOURCE REPORTED NIKHOM'S DENIAL THAT ANY SUCH REQUEST HAD BEEN MADE. IN EDITORIAL OF SAME EDITION, STRIKING HOTEL WORKERS WERE STRONGLY CRITICIZED ON GROUND THEIR PAY AND WORKING CONDITIONS

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WERE RELATIVELY FAVORABLE; STRIKERS ARE DEMANDING 600

BAHT PER MONTH MINIMUM AND INCOME FROM THE SERVICE CHARGE OF 900 BAHT PER MONTH; MANAGEMENT IS OFFERING 500 AND 800 BAHT, RESPECTIVELY. EDITOR ENDED BY REQUESTING MINISTRY OF INTERIOR TO INTERVENE TO BRING ABOUT A SETTLEMENT. END UNCLASSIFIED.

3. LABOR DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL CONTACTED BY EMBASSY OFFICER WAS LESS CONFIDENT OF EARLY SETTLEMENT THAN AT TIME OF REFTEL. SAID NEW EFFORT WAS BEING MADE TO BRING TWO SIDES TOGETHER, BUT THAT LABOR DEPARTMENT WAS DELIBERATELY AVOIDING DIRECT INTERVENTION IN THE DISPUTE BECAUSE OF CRITICISM DIRECTED AT IT FOR ALLEGEDLY BEING TOO SYMPATHETIC TO WORKERS.

4. COMMENT:

A. WHILE THE PRESS HAS RUMORED THAT STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS WILL SUPPORT THE STRIKERS, THIS DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE AN ISSUE ON WHICH THE PRESENTLY DIVIDED STUDENT GROUPS WILL PULL TOGETHER. STUDENTS AS A WHOLE HAVE BEEN QUIESCENT LATELY, EVEN PASSING UP THE OPPORTUNITY FOR COMMENT, LET ALONE ACT, ON THE JUDICIAL DISPOSITION OF THE THUNG YAI HUNTING SCANDAL WHICH WAS SENT TO THE COURT BECAUSE OF STUDENT PRESSURES IN THE FIRST PLACE. SOME "BRAND-NAME" STUDENT LEADERS MAY SPEAK AT THE LUMPINI RALLY, THEREBY INCREASING RTG NERVOUSNESS, BUT SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS OF STUDENT DEMONSTRATORS ARE UNLIKELY TO JOIN.

B. ON BALANCE, AND CONSIDERING THAT REMAINING ISSUE IS LIMITED TO WAGES RATHER THAN TO MORE EMOTIONAL AND CONTENTIOUS PROBLEMS OF REMOVING UNPOPULAR SUPERVISORS, A COMPROMISE SETTLEMENT SEEMS LIKELY BEFORE FRIDAY'S DEADLINE. AT SAME TIME IT IS EVIDENT THAT DUSIT THANI MANAGEMENT, WITH THE REPORTED ENCOURAGEMENT OF OTHER HOTELIERS AND THAI BUSINESS GENERALLY, IS DETERMINED NOT TO YIELD EASILY. THAI BUSINESSWOMEN HAVE A RECOGNIZED REPUTATION FOR EFFECTIVENESS, AND MANAGER OF THE DUSIT, MADAME CHANAT PIYA-OUI, IS APPARENTLY DETERMINED TO AVOID BEING AN EXCEPTION.

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